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## WORKING HOURS OF WOMEN IN CHICAGO

During the 1915 session of the Illinois legislature, an effort was made to amend the so-called "ten-hour" law which, enacted in 1909 and amended in 1911, limits to ten hours a day the work of women employed in "any mechanical or mercantile establishment, or factory, or laundry, hotel or restaurant, or telegraph or telephone establishment or office thereof, or in any place of amusement, or by any express or transportation or public utility business, or by any common carrier or in any public institution, incorporated or unincorporated, in this state." By the proposed change the working day would have been limited to nine hours, and the working week to fifty hours, with specific exception permitting a fifty-four-hour week in mercantile establishments. Such a shortening of working hours would have been quite in conformity with the recent legislative policy of other states and with the practice of a considerable proportion of employers in the state of Illinois. Under the existing Illinois law, while the working day is limited to ten hours, there is no restriction of the number of hours per week, and women may, therefore, if the employers demand it, legally work seventy hours a week. In view of generally accepted standards for women's employment such a possibility is of course an anachronism, especially unsatisfactory in Illinois, which ranks as the third manufacturing state in the Union. Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia now limit the working week to sixty hours or less; two have a sixty-three-hour week; four are in the same class with Illinois; and only nine have failed to enact legislation on the subject. Moreover, the ten-hour day is rapidly being reduced. An eight-hour day has been established in five states, Arizona, California, Colorado, Washington, and Wyoming, and in the District of Columbia. Six others, Oregon, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, and Utah, have established nine-hour schedules. Idaho and Montana also have a nine-hour day, without further restriction of the number of hours per week. It is true that in few states are the limitations at present so general in scope as in Illinois;

but the desirability of amendments rendering the application of such laws more comprehensive has of late very generally been recognized, as is attested by the fact that legislation on this subject has been constantly in the making during the last few years. Since the amendment of the Illinois law in 1911, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming have passed or amended laws restricting the hours of women's work.

Further legislation, then, would be appropriate in Illinois, if the example of other states may be taken as a standard. Indeed, the present law is more backward than general practice within the state. This conclusion seems justified by the results of an examination<sup>1</sup> into the records concerning the working hours of Chicago women in industry, which are to be found in the office of the state factory inspector. Such an examination was undertaken in order to discover what proportion of women employed in Chicago are working the full ten-hour day permitted by law, or longer; what proportion have already been granted shorter hours; and in which industries this change has taken place.

The records in the office of the state factory inspector are apparently the only easily available source of information on the subject. These records are kept, not for statistical purposes, but simply to record inspections made in enforcing the ten-hour law and other labor laws. However, as a result of these "ten-hour law" inspections, certain facts about working hours are a matter of public record, and are perhaps the more reliable for this study because they were not collected expressly for it.

In order that the figures may be interpreted correctly, some explanation of the methods employed by the factory inspector's office is necessary. Three schedules have been provided for use in recording the observations of the inspectors. Each of these is known by the name of the law for the enforcement of which it is

<sup>1</sup> Made at the request of the president of the Chicago Women's Trade Union League, for use before the committees on labor of the Illinois General Assembly.

especially designed: the "child-labor" card, the "health, safety, and comfort" card, and the "ten-hour" card. The "ten-hour" schedule calls for a great amount of information with regard to the employment of women, but these items are never completely covered. It is, indeed, frequently unnecessary to record replies to all the questions, because, if the inspector finds an establishment with good conditions and short hours, the name and address of the firm and "No" checked after the question "Overtime?" disposes of the question of legality. In most cases, however, the number of women employed is recorded, and either the total number of hours per day or the time of beginning and ending work, with a statement as to the time allowed off during the day.

The files of the factory inspector's office were examined, then, and these facts were noted from all the cards filled out with sufficient accuracy and fulness to be significant. But, because of the omissions mentioned above, it is not claimed that the resulting figures picture the condition of the entire number of wage-earning women in Chicago. No official estimate of their number has been made since the Census of 1910, when there were 162,847<sup>1</sup> women in

<sup>1</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, IV, 152-65:

WOMEN IN CERTAIN SPECIFIED OCCUPATIONS IN CHICAGO

Manufacturing and mechanical .....	71,381
Transportation	
Telephone operators. ....	4,747
Trades	
Clerks in stores. ....	10,925
Saleswomen. ....	11,985
Others. ....	5,886
Domestic and personal service	
Barbers, laundresses, and manicurists. ....	1,789
Laundry operatives. ....	4,466
Chambermaids. ....	780
Cooks. ....	3,949
Waitresses. ....	3,319
Cleaners and renovators. ....	186
Clerical occupations	
Bookkeepers, cashiers, and accountants. ....	9,977
Clerks except in stores. ....	11,072
Messenger, bundle, and office girls. ....	717
Stenographers and typists. ....	21,669
Total. ....	162,847

This classification omits professional workers, domestic servants, etc., which are not taken account of in the present investigation. Clerical workers and stenographers are included because, although relatively very few are included in this study, they are represented.

Chicago engaged in occupations corresponding to those now included in the factory inspector's records. Since the enumeration of 1910 the female population of Chicago seems to have increased from 1,059,519 to 1,191,785,<sup>1</sup> or 12.4 per cent; and as the relative increase in gainfully employed women has undoubtedly been greater, there are probably more than 183,040 women concerned. It is believed, however, that the figures obtained are representative of the whole group. If not, it is probable that they present an overstatement rather than an understatement of the hours actually demanded of the workers by employers. For, since the factory inspector must keep the most careful record of firms requiring long hours, if all the firms could have been included whose records are not kept fully, the proportion of firms having shorter hours would undoubtedly be increased. It must also be noted that the latest complete records were for the last half of 1913 and the first half of 1914, and are thus over a year old. The inspectors say that during the last year they have found very few cases of overtime work, and that now they have practically none of the difficulty in enforcing the ten-hour law which was experienced in former years. This indicates that conditions have improved during the past year and that now, in 1915, even shorter hours prevail than are shown by these earlier figures.

The figures have been grouped to show, first, what percentage of employers would be affected by the enforcement of a nine-hour day for women, and secondly, what proportion of women workers would have their day shortened.

Table I shows the facts recorded with reference to 3,049 establishments. These facts concerning the establishments are less interesting than the same facts with reference to the employees which appear in Table II. Both have been given, however, for purposes of comparison. Any marked difference between the percentages for the employers and for the employees answers the question whether the large or the small concerns require longer hours in a given industry.

Table II shows that over 100,000 employees are occupied in these establishments, and that 49.3 per cent of them work over

<sup>1</sup> Chicago School Census, May, 1914.

nine hours,<sup>1</sup> as contrasted with 41.6 per cent for the establishments. This difference indicates that long hours are required

TABLE I

HOURS OF EMPLOYMENT IN 3,049 CHICAGO ESTABLISHMENTS EMPLOYING FIVE OR MORE WOMEN, 1913-14

INDUSTRIES	NUMBER OF ESTAB- LISHMENTS	PERCENTAGE HAVING A WORKING DAY:			
		Under 9 Hours	9 Hours	Over 9 Hours	Total
Grand total.....	3,049	33.0	25.4	41.6	100.0
Total wearing apparel manufac- turers.....	1,069	20.8	38.0	41.2	100.0
Clothing.....	854	18.2	38.5	43.3	100.0
Hats.....	112	23.2	43.7	33.1	100.0
Neckwear.....	25	72.0	20.0	8.0	100.0
Shoes.....	11	18.2	9.1	72.7	100.0
Other wearing apparel.....	67	31.4	32.8	35.8	100.0
Total other manufacturers.....	605	40.3	23.8	35.9	100.0
Machines, cars, etc.....	49	61.3	20.4	18.3	100.0
Tools, utensils, etc.....	81	54.3	17.3	28.4	100.0
Electrical apparatus.....	29	45.0	34.5	20.5	100.0
Furniture, wood.....	40	32.5	40.0	27.5	100.0
Household furnishings.....	32	25.0	21.8	53.2	100.0
Paper boxes.....	37	16.2	35.1	48.7	100.0
Cigars.....	23	47.9	13.0	39.1	100.0
Candy.....	33	33.3	15.1	51.6	100.0
Food products.....	49	30.6	14.3	55.1	100.0
Miscellaneous.....	232	40.1	25.4	34.5	100.0
Total office employees.....	127	84.3	11.7	4.0	100.0
Offices, etc.....	104	87.5	7.7	4.8	100.0
Mail order.....	23	69.6	30.4	0.0	100.0
Total printing and publishing....	208	66.0	21.1	12.9	100.0
Printing.....	78	57.7	29.5	12.8	100.0
Publishing.....	38	92.1	7.9	0.0	100.0
Bookbinding and publishing....	39	66.7	25.6	7.7	100.0
Engraving and lithographing....	53	58.4	15.1	26.4	100.0
Total hotels, restaurants, etc.....	344	14.5	13.3	72.2	100.0
Hotels.....	33	21.2	21.2	57.6	100.0
Restaurants.....	232	11.6	10.3	78.1	100.0
Bakeries and delicatessen.....	54	22.3	25.9	51.8	100.0
"Hotels and restaurants," etc....	25	16.0	4.0	80.0	100.0
Total mercantile establishments....	416	49.4	18.4	32.2	100.0
Department stores,* clothing, 5- and 10-cent.....	155	16.1	21.9	62.0	100.0
Other mercantile.....	261	69.0	16.5	14.5	100.0
Total other occupations.....	280	14.2	14.8	71.0	100.0
Laundries.....	172	0.0	4.1	95.9	100.0
Institutions.....	19	15.8	21.0	63.2	100.0
Miscellaneous.....	89	41.6	34.8	23.6	100.0

\* This does not include the large State Street department stores, because the records of their employees were very vague.

<sup>1</sup> The nine-hour-day classification in Tables I and II includes also those few firms having a 9½-hour day.

by more employers in the larger establishments than in those employing fewer women. A more detailed study of the hours of

TABLE II

HOURS OF EMPLOYMENT OF 101,643 CHICAGO WOMEN IN INDUSTRY, 1913-14

INDUSTRIES	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	PERCENTAGE HAVING A WORKING DAY:			
		Under 9 Hours	9 Hours	Over 9 Hours	Total
Grand total.....	101,643	23.2	27.5	49.3	100.0
Total wearing apparel manufac- turers.....	39,495	14.2	28.7	57.1	100.0
Clothing.....	32,049	12.2	27.5	60.3	100.0
Hats.....	2,503	13.9	45.3	40.8	100.0
Neckwear.....	1,324	90.5	8.6	0.9	100.0
Shoes.....	1,296	1.1	19.1	79.8	100.0
Other wearing apparel.....	2,323	8.8	42.7	48.5	100.0
Total other manufacturers.....	25,687	18.1	37.1	44.8	100.0
Machines, cars, etc.....	1,884	45.0	17.7	37.3	100.0
Tools, utensils, etc.....	2,095	25.1	32.7	42.2	100.0
Electrical apparatus.....	4,142	5.5	90.7	3.9	100.0
Furniture, wood.....	1,937	13.2	70.1	16.7	100.0
Household furnishings.....	1,065	9.4	17.3	73.3	100.0
Paper boxes.....	2,360	7.7	30.7	61.6	100.0
Cigars.....	1,165	9.9	2.1	88.0	100.0
Candy.....	2,588	7.1	10.2	82.7	100.0
Food products.....	2,395	12.9	11.5	75.6	100.0
Miscellaneous.....	6,056	31.6	31.7	36.7	100.0
Total office employees.....	5,380	81.6	13.1	5.3	100.0
Offices, etc.....	2,059	82.4	3.8	13.8	100.0
Mail order.....	3,321	81.1	18.9	0.0	100.0
Total printing and publishing....	5,777	55.7	29.1	15.2	100.0
Printing.....	1,686	38.9	51.4	9.7	100.0
Publishing.....	945	95.7	4.3	0.0	100.0
Bookbinding and publishing....	1,744	60.4	36.6	3.0	100.0
Engraving and lithographing....	1,402	42.8	9.9	47.3	100.0
Total hotels, restaurants, etc.....	8,665	12.1	24.5	63.4	100.0
Hotels.....	1,481	9.1	6.1	84.8	100.0
Restaurants.....	2,329	19.3	11.9	68.8	100.0
Bakeries and delicatessen.....	3,721	8.6	46.8	44.6	100.0
"Hotels and restaurants," etc.....	1,134	12.3	0.5	87.2	100.0
Total mercantile establishments....	8,244	44.0	18.9	37.1	100.0
Department stores, clothing, 5- and 10-cent.....	3,760	14.1	22.8	63.1	100.0
Other mercantile.....	4,484	69.1	15.6	15.3	100.0
Total other occupations.....	8,395	11.5	12.9	75.6	100.0
Laundries.....	5,393	0.0	3.3	96.7	100.0
Institutions.....	1,172	7.0	30.0	63.0	100.0
Miscellaneous.....	1,830	48.5	30.7	20.8	100.0

work without regard to industry, as summarized in Table III, shows that more women are working on a nine-hour basis than on any other. Twenty-eight thousand women appear in this group,

or three thousand more than in the ten-hour classification, which is the next largest group. Only about 26 per cent, alike of establishments and of employees, are at present working on a ten-hour-day schedule. These facts are probably surprising to those employers who suppose that all industry is now running ten hours a day and that a serious disturbance would result from a nine-hour limitation.

TABLE III

ESTABLISHMENTS AND EMPLOYEES IN ALL CHICAGO INDUSTRIES FOR WHICH DATA WERE AVAILABLE, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO THE LENGTH OF THE WORKING DAY

LENGTH OF WORKING DAY	ESTABLISHMENTS		EMPLOYEES	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Under 7½ hours.....	12	0.4	167	0.2
7½ and under 8 hours.....	92	3.0	1,507	1.5
8 and under 8½ hours.....	472	15.5	8,923	8.8
8½ and under 9 hours.....	429	14.1	12,988	12.8
9 and under 9½ hours.....	774	25.4	28,007	27.7
9½ and under 10 hours.....	453	14.9	23,577	23.1
10 hours.....	776	25.4	25,140	24.6
Over 10 hours.....	41	1.3	1,334	1.3
Total.....	3,049	100.0	101,643	100.0

Some interesting differences between industries appear from an examination of the figures as classified in Tables I and II. The results for the clothing manufacture are the most interesting because Chicago is a great center for the clothing industry and has more women employed in this than in any other industry. Of the 32,049 women employed in the manufacture of clothing, 60.3 per cent work over nine hours, 27.5 per cent nine hours, and 12.2 per cent under nine hours. The difference between the percentages for employees and the percentages for the establishments in this industry shows that in this case long hours prevail especially in the large establishments. Other manufacturing industries showing long hours are shoes, paper boxes, cigars, candy, and food products, but, on the whole, the hours required in the clothing manufacturing establishments are above the average.



The result for office employees is quite different, and is especially significant because the evidence includes only those office employees in firms coming under the factory inspector's observation, taking no account of the great majority of office employees in the city whose hours of labor bear no relation to the hours prevailing in other occupations. Only 4.0 per cent of these firms would be affected by the passage of a nine-hour bill, and 84.3 per cent already have a working day of less than nine hours. The printing and publishing trades also show a large percentage of workers now having a nine-hour day or less, owing probably to the eight-and-a-half-hour day set by the printers' union.

The only concerns showing an almost invariable ten-hour day are the laundries, with 96.7 per cent of their women working over nine hours. Next to these are the hotels, restaurants, and bakeries. In this group 72.2 per cent of the establishments and 63.4 per cent of the employees work over nine hours. Bakeries, however, show shorter hours than the other occupations included in this group, only 44.6 per cent of the employees and 51.8 per cent of the establishments having a working day of over nine hours.

Taking all the mercantile establishments together, it appears that 32.2 per cent would be affected by a nine-hour law. The figures for these businesses are much more illuminating, however, when subdivided. When the department, clothing, and five- and ten-cent stores are grouped together, 63.1 per cent of the employees are shown to be working over nine hours a day. For all stores outside this classification, only 15.3 per cent work over nine hours, and 69.0 per cent work less than nine hours. This raises a question as to the inherent difference between department stores and other stores that makes necessary so much longer working hours in the one than in the other in order to make business pay. In so far as it is merely competition among themselves that keeps these stores open, a law shortening the hours of all alike should cause no difficulty.

For the other individual industries considerable material was available, but not enough to make really significant percentages. Yet even if the figures are not conclusive with regard to every industry, there is something compelling in the total. No one

TABLE IV  
HOURS OF EMPLOYMENT OF CHICAGO WOMEN IN 3,049 ESTABLISHMENTS EMPLOYING FIVE OR MORE WOMEN, 1913-14,  
CLASSIFIED BY TOTAL INDUSTRIAL GROUPS

INDUSTRIES	PERCENTAGE HAVING A WORKING DAY:									
	NUMBER		Under 9 Hours		9 Hours		Over 9 Hours		Total	
	Establish-ments	Employees	Establish-ments	Employees	Establish-ments	Employees	Establish-ments	Employees	Establish-ments	Employees
Grand total.....	3,049	101,643	33.0	23.2	25.4	27.5	41.6	49.3	100.0	100.0
Wearing apparel manufacturers.....	1,069	39,495	20.8	14.2	38.0	28.7	41.2	57.1	100.0	100.0
Other manufacturers.....	605	25,087	40.3	18.1	23.8	37.1	35.9	44.8	100.0	100.0
Office employees.....	127	5,380	84.3	81.6	11.7	13.1	4.0	5.3	100.0	100.0
Printing and publishing.....	208	5,777	66.0	55.7	21.1	29.1	12.9	15.2	100.0	100.0
Hotels, restaurants, etc.....	344	8,665	14.5	12.1	13.3	24.5	72.2	63.4	100.0	100.0
Mercantile establishments.....	416	8,244	49.4	44.0	18.4	18.9	32.2	37.1	100.0	100.0
Other occupations.....	280	8,395	14.2	11.5	14.8	12.9	71.0	75.6	100.0	100.0

knows or can know exactly how many women in Chicago go to work every morning, or where they work, or when they punch the time clock, but the data concerning over 100,000 of these women are summarized and presented in Table IV. This table shows that of the women employees in Chicago whose hours of work are reported, one half would be directly benefited by a restriction of their working hours to nine per day, and the other half would thereby have their present favorable hours legally secured. It also shows that, although practically all of the employers' associations opposed the enactment of the nine-hour law, over half of the employers represented by this evidence are already living up to its requirements.

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